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UNCLAS DJIBOUTI 000175

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: FORWARDING THE MPP THROUGH BLACK HISTORY MONTH
PROGRAMMING

1. (U) The Public Diplomacy section's Black History Month programming continues to engage Djiboutian citizens with such events as a gospel concert, a traveling poster show, conversation groups, an essay contest and receptions. These events have been successful with youth and have promoted mutual understanding while forwarding our human rights and good governance MPP goals.

2. (U) Embassy Djibouti opened its Black History Month programming at the country's only university with a traveling poster show featuring famous black Americans and their biographies (in French). The show, which lasts a week at each of its three venues, is in each case accompanied by an event designed to bring Americans and Djiboutians together. French language flyers chronicling important dates in the American civil rights movement are distributed at these events.

3. (U) To close first phase of the poster show, Public Diplomacy held a concert at the University that featured live, traditional African music, American gospel music and a short discourse on the connections between the two. Performers were a well-known Djiboutian musician and soldiers from CJTF-HOA's Camp Lemonier. About 160 people attended, including Djiboutian students and members of the American civilian community.

4. (U) On February 10, the Embassy closed its essay contest. High school and university students were invited to submit 250 words on one of two themes: "How can education influence positive change" or "How can tolerance encourage progress?" The essays will be judged by a panel of American staff and International Visitor alumni and prizes will be awarded at a luncheon at the Ambassador's residence on February 28.

5. (U) On Monday, February 14, the Public Affairs Officer attended the inaugural meeting of an English language conversation group aimed at English language teachers. Topics included famous Black Americans and the point of Black History Month, as well as the need to unify English language curriculum in private night schools.

6. (U) Also on February 14 the poster show opened at Embassy Djibouti. It was accompanied on February 16 by a reception at the Ambassador's residence for all those Djiboutians who have traveled to the U.S. on an USG-funded program in the past five years or received U.S.-funded training in Djibouti. Attendees included political figures, teachers, military members, police officers, business leaders and other members of civil society. In her speech to the assembly, the Ambassador urged the formation of an International Visitors alumni group, which would be involved in Embassy programming and would independently develop means of sharing their IV experience with fellow Djiboutians. The idea seemed to be warmly received.

7. (U) Black History Month programming is continuing on schedule, with the poster show moving on February 22 to an artisan fair jointly sponsored by the Public Diplomacy and Self-Help sections of the Embassy. A smaller version of the show will be disbursed to the districts at that time. On February 23 the Embassy will host a viewing of the film "To Kill a Mockingbird" followed by a discussion panel. Finally, on February 27, Djibouti Telecommunications will host a reception to mark the poster show's last venue.

RAGSDALE